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CZECHOSLOVAKS SEARCH FOR FIREARMS IN MORAVIA

Interreport Ost
Vienna, 17 Oct 1953

According to the Vienna periodical Interreport Ost of 17 October 1953, frequent house-to-house searches for firearms have been conducted in Moravia since the beginning of October 1953. The searches are said to be directed mainly against members of the Communist Party and other national organizations. Most of the weapons discovered were found in the possession of Communist Party officials, such as the city secretary of Znojmo, the kraj secretary of Hodonin, and the secretary of the Lumber Workers Union in Plzen.

Interreport Ost stated that the guilty parties were not arrested but were reported to the provincial secretariats of their individual organizations. Repeated disregard of warnings to surrender their firearms, however, will cause such persons to be subject to disciplinary action which could result in expulsion from the Party. Another report received by Interreport Ost, and published on the same day, stated that any official found to be in possession of firearms after December 1953 would be automatically expelled from the Party and prosecuted in court.

According to Interreport Ost, the reason for this campaign, which has been under way in one form or another since the summer of 1953, was the frequency of incidents involving the use of firearms, resulting from disagreements between party officials. As an example, the publication cited the shooting of the youth referent of the Plzen Communist Party by a Communist youth leader during a violent argument over the opening of additional summer camps. In addition, it apparently has become customary for party officials to do a little poaching, causing the Forest Administration to lodge frequent complaints with the Communist Party, the periodical stated.

Since appeals for the surrender of firearms have been disregarded, Interreport Ost reported, the matter will be turned over to the police for action. Interreport Ost stated however, that Communist Party circles feel that even this step will be ineffective since many local organizations apparently have buried entire arsenals and are not deemed ready to turn these weapons over to security authorities at this time.

In this connection, Interreport Ost said that permits to possess weapons, which have heretofore been rather easy to obtain, are now much harder to come by and that local Party organizations have been deprived of the right to approve applications for permits. All applications are now handled directly by the provincial security headquarters. According to the publication, the local and okres organizations protested loudly when an impending review of outstanding weapons permits was announced through Party secretaries. Their arguments

in favor of a need for protection from saboteurs and deviationists were neutralized, however, by the provincial secretariats who stated that the security authorities were the only bodies strong enough to effect such protection and that, in case of need, sizable inventories of firearms were in the hands of the paramilitary organizations, and still under effective security control.

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